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a resource in:

Sexuality

Today's Pornography Landscape



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

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Today's Pornography Landscape

In April of 2016 staff from ACCFS attended an international conference hosted by Christian apologist Josh McDowell entitled Set Free Global Summit. The topic of the conference was understanding and reacting to the pornography reality in our churches. Research conducted by Barna Group was presented. Conclusions of their 2015 study – *The Porn Phenomenon* was the statistical ground work that framed up the talking points for the conference. This study surveyed 2771 participants and garnered data on pornography use. The four-day conference consisted of expert psychologists, statisticians, apologists, neurologists, pastors and activists addressing the landscape of pornography in our culture and in Christian churches. The facts provided below are a few “high points” intended to begin to paint the current cultural picture of pornography pervasiveness.

How have we come to this?

- *Economics* – The price of sex over the decades is being driven down. The pill and abortion drives down the consequence of having children. Technology delivers pornography for minimal financial costs. The “hooking up” climate separate sex from the investment of love. Sex has never been so affordable. ⁶
- *Philosophy* – Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey plowed the ground in his sex studies at University of Indiana in 1948 whereby he concluded that “children are sexual beings from birth.” His philosophies inspired Harry Hay (1950) – gay rights, Hugh Hefner (1953) – pornography, Harry Benjamin and John Money (1960) – gender theory, and Mary Caldrone (1965) – founder of SIECUS (sex education). ⁷

What do people mean by “porn”?

- While perhaps there is a definition for pornography, more clarity is brought to the term when we understand its use within culture. The following are the five most common indicators that people use to identify porn. ⁶
- It's porn if any of the following are present:
 - Sexually explicit
 - Displays sexual intercourse
 - Displays sexual acts
 - Is intended for arousal of viewer
 - Contains full nudity

Porn trajectory:

- Over the years porn is growing more explicit, violent and racial. ⁶
- In recent years it has become more participatory. The producer and consumer lines are blurred. Via sexting and snap chat, participants produce porn and consume the porn of others. ⁶
- First time exposure to porn is becoming increasingly younger. ⁶
- Virtual reality has become reality. Headsets and hand devices now allow for the consumption of porn to be 3D and participatory. The porn industry has very ambitious plans (already set in motion) to capture the technology of virtual reality for their customers. Individuals will be able to participate with porn in new sensory ways. While some virtual reality manufacturers such as Samsung are trying to distance themselves from porn applications, the abuse of the technology is real. “*We look to the gaming industry to really drive adoption. You're not going to buy a device that's just for porn. It's embarrassing.*” Ian Paul – Porn producer ¹⁰

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Porn use in the church and culture:

Percent of individuals who use pornography		
Demographic	Church	Non-church
Males ages 13-24 yrs	41%	72%
Males ages 25+ yrs	23%	55%
Females ages 13-24 yrs	13%	36%
Females ages 25+ yrs	5%	17%
Senior Pastors	14%	

Who is seeking out the pastor for help with personal pornography use?			
Men	Married 59%	Single 36%	Teen boys 33%
Women	Married 5%	Single 5%	Teen girls 4%

- Only 7% of churches report having a ministry program for those struggling with porn. ⁶
- 40% of porn using Christians would rather not use porn at all. 14% of porn using non-Christians would rather not use porn at all. ⁶

Generational Shifts

- Porn 2.0:
 - The newest form of porn is not “distant and delivered” but “personal and created.” This porn 2.0 blurs the lines of producer and consumer. Texting and Snap Chat are the common mediums.
 - Teens & young adults: 57% male, 69% female have received a nude image.
 - Teens & young adults: 33% male, 51% female have sent a nude image. ⁶
- Teens & young adults speak more openly about porn. The topic that was “unmentionable” two generations ago is conversational with the younger generation. ⁶

Morality shift:

- Young adults use more porn – and are less likely to say it’s bad for society. Within culture, teens and young adults hold a more “accepted” view of pornography, a concession that it is a part of normal life. ⁶
- Only 32% of teens and young adults say viewing porn is wrong. There is a generational shift in the perception of porn in our culture. ⁶
- Pornography elicits unrealistic beliefs about sex, especially among young people. ⁶
- Pornography use erodes morality. For example, viewing violent porn renders a user more likely to see rape and violent sex more favorably. ⁶

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Why do we use Porn?

Rank & Age	13-17 yrs	18-24 yrs	25-30 yrs	31-50 yrs	51-69 yrs
1	For personal arousal	For personal arousal	For personal arousal	For personal arousal	For personal arousal
2	Boredom	Boredom	Curiosity	Set the mood with partner	It's fun
3	Curiosity	Curiosity	Get tips or ideas for my sex life	Curiosity	Curiosity
4	It's fun	It's fun	Boredom	Get tips or ideas for my sex life	It's less risky than actually having sex

Rank & Gender	Men	Women
1	For personal arousal (63%)	For personal arousal (55%)
2	It's fun (33%)	To set the mood with partner (41%)
3	Curiosity (26%)	Curiosity (36%)
4	Get tips or ideas for my sex life (23%)	Get tips or ideas for my sex life (34%)
5	To set the mood with partner (21%)	It's fun (17%)

Rank & Marital Status	Married	Single (never married)
1	For personal arousal	For personal arousal
2	To set the mood with spouse	It's fun
3	Get tips or ideas for my sex life	Curiosity
4	Curiosity	Boredom
5	It's fun	It's less risky than actually having sex

Making Connections:

- Actively seeking out porn correlates positively with innocently “coming across porn.” That is to say, there is a positive relationship between how frequently a person innocently comes across porn and how much they consume. (note: which variable causes the other is not established. Strong argument can be made in both directions.) ⁶
- Pornography increases one's appetite for more deviant pornography. ⁶
- Any given porn site is most likely owned by MindGeek – a global industry-leading information technology firm. The porn industry is well-organized and has an insatiable appetite for money. ³
- There are clear connections between pornography and other deviant behaviors such as prostitution, rape, and child sex slavery. By viewing porn, one supports indirectly activities they most likely oppose. ¹

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Brain Chemistry:

- Our brains release chemicals called neurotransmitters under certain conditions. In the “reward center” of the brain, the chemical released is called dopamine. This “feel good” chemical reminds us to pay attention to what made us feel good. It might be:
 - Drinking a cold drink on a hot day
 - Enjoying a meal with friends
 - Sexual activity
- For example, drugs are addictive because they “bypass” the natural rewards and directly stimulate the dopamine release; they are much more reinforcing to human behavior.
- There are “process addictions” like sexual addiction and gambling that have very similar effects on the brain. Thus, when one associates a stimulating image (pornography) with an orgasm, over time the person learns that this activity helps one feel better, and the brain changes to “expect” the use of porn will always medicate bad feelings.
- Continued exposure to pornography releases surge after surge of dopamine, giving the brain an unnatural high. The brain eventually fatigues, limiting the release of dopamine, leaving the viewer wanting more but unable to reach a level of satisfaction; this event is called desensitization.¹²

“Like a path is created in the woods with each successive hiker, so do the neural paths set the course for the next time an erotic image is viewed. Over time these neural paths become wider as they are repeatedly traveled with each exposure to pornography. They become the automatic pathway through which interactions with women are routed. The neural circuitry anchors this process solidly in the brain. With each lingering stare, pornography deepens the Grand Canyon-like gorge in the brain through which images of women are destined to flow. This extends to women that they have not seen naked or engaging in sexual acts as well.” - Dr. William Struthers (neurologist)⁹

- Normally, when emotions, impulses, and urges surge from the midbrain, the prefrontal lobes are there to exercise “executive control” over them. But when this region is weakened by continual porn use, willpower is eroded and there is nothing to stop the sense of craving for pornography. As a result, the person experiences the urge, not just as a desire, but as an intense need. Neuroscientists call this problem hypofrontality. This person is no longer has mastery over his passions but is a slave to them.^{2,8,11}

Shame:

- Shame is not helpful in helping one live an overcoming life. “Shame does little but drive sin into hiding, where it festers and grows in isolation from community and accountability.”⁶

Collateral Damage:

- Porn is not victimless. Spouses, children and churches need to be cared for.
- Disclosure is important for spouses. However, great care needs to be done in facilitating this process. Opinions vary.

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Hope:

- Personal counseling and mentorship appear to be the two most effective strategies for dealing with porn. ⁶
- There is a very significant positive difference between pornography use and views among Christians and Non-Christians. ⁶
- The culture is beginning to link adverse consequences with pornography. ⁵
- By many metrics the church is collapsing by way of sexual immorality and impurity. However, it is not uncommon for God to use Satan's attacks to strengthen and further His church. Consider persecution for example. We then may be at the cusp of revival in the church. For surely, revival will be the outgrowth of the gospel and the gospel is now the desperate need of the church.

"... I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." - Jesus

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Margin of error

At the 95% confidence interval, the sampling error for all percentages is less than 5%.

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